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SENIOR LEADER AIRBORNE C3: A CASE FOR A
STREAMLINED APPROACH TO FUNDING?

by

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Biography

Lt Col Chris Thompson is assigned to the Air War College, Air University, Maxwell AFB, AL. He entered the Air Force in 1993 as a graduate of the U.S. Air Force Academy and attended Euro-NATO Joint Jet Pilot Training (ENJJPT) at Sheppard AFB, TX. He was then assigned to the 54th Airlift Flight at Maxwell AFB, AL, flying C-21As. Lt Col Thompson followed this assignment as a KC-10 pilot in the 6th Air Refueling Squadron, Travis AFB, CA, where he commanded strategic airlift and air refueling missions in support of Operations SOUTHERN WATCH, ALLIED FORCE, and ENDURING FREEDOM. In 2002, he was selectively hired into the 89th Airlift Wing to fly C-20Bs and C-37A/Bs for the 99th Airlift Squadron, Joint Base Andrews, MD. Following Intermediate Developmental Education at the Naval Postgraduate School in 2006, Lt Col Thompson was assigned to the NATO military staff at SHAPE, Belgium. He worked as a Defense Planner and then Military Assistant until early 2009 when he returned to the 99th Airlift Squadron and served as the Director of Operations and then Commander. Following command, he served as the Deputy Commander of the most diverse and highly visible Operations Group in the Air Force, where he assisted in the oversight of a 450-person, 17-aircraft organization with a 15,000 hour flying program and \$21M budget, executing airlift for the President, Vice President, Congress and other national and foreign leaders.

Abstract

The U.S. National Security Strategy (NSS) is a globally employed strategy that obligates the synergistic use of all four instruments of national power (diplomatic, information, military and economic pillars) to affect the nation's desired security outcomes. Since the Air Force's inception in 1947, it has been the lead agency for flying the nation's highest civil and military leaders around the globe as they implement the NSS. Today, that important mandate still rests with the U.S. Air Force. The Executive Airlift (EA) fleet that upholds this mandate and its Senior Leader Command, Control and Communication Systems – Airborne (SLC3S-A) are pivotal to U.S. national leaders' ability to effectively wield those instruments of power; however, SLC3S-A are not without problems, the most important being resourcing of system upgrades.

This paper examines the importance of EA and its SLC3S-A and then evaluates how those systems' upgrades are funded on the EA fleet. It will then assess how a different yet also unique weapon system funds its mission-specific aircraft upgrades and compare the programs to expose drawbacks to EA's current construct. The result is an attempt to invigorate the discussion of how senior leader airborne communications can be fielded faster and more efficiently to better support U.S. civil and military leaders as they travel throughout the globe. This paper argues EA and its SLC3S-A systems are analogous to another unique program that previously faced resourcing issues; however, the other system corrected the problems to allow that program's stakeholders more influence, add efficiency to the resourcing process and ultimately provide better support to the end users. In a similar manner, EA's users, the U.S.' most senior leaders, can be more effectively supported as they wield all four instruments of national power to carry out the NSS if comparable changes are adapted for EA's SLC3S-A.

In the aftermath of World War II, it was the United States that helped take the lead in constructing a new international architecture to keep the peace and advance prosperity—from NATO and the United Nations, to treaties that govern the laws and weapons of war; from the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, to an expanding web of trade agreements. This architecture, despite its flaws, averted world war, enabled economic growth, and advanced human rights, while facilitating effective burden sharing among the United States, our allies, and partners.

*The U.S. National Security Strategy, May 2010*¹

Introduction

The U.S. National Security Strategy (NSS) is a globally employed strategy that obligates the synergistic use of all four instruments of national power (diplomatic, information, military and economic pillars) to affect the nation's desired security outcomes. Since the Air Force's inception in 1947, it has been the lead agency for flying the nation's highest civil and military leaders around the globe as they implement the NSS. Today, that important mandate still rests with the U.S. Air Force, and the vast majority of that responsibility lies with the men and women of the 89th Airlift Wing (89 AW) at Joint Base Andrews, Maryland.

The 89 AW is a small wing with approximately 1,100 active duty members, Air Force civilians and contract maintenance personnel. It employs 19 aircraft with an annual flying program of over 15,000 hours. The uniqueness of its mission does not only lay with the selectively manned and highly trained personnel that fly, fix or support the aircraft operating into well over 100 countries throughout the globe each year. The aircraft themselves are exclusive despite being commercial off-the-shelf Boeing 737s and 757s and Gulfstream IIIs, Vs and 550s.² However, what makes them truly distinctive and the mission unique are the systems that allow their users to conduct highly secure telephone, email, fax and video teleconference (VTC) communications just as if they were sitting in their offices in the Pentagon, State Department, White House, Combatant Command headquarters or a deployed location.

Despite being exceptional platforms that support users such as the President, Vice President, Secretaries of Defense and State (SecDef and SecState), Combatant Commanders and many others of the nations' highest leaders, the platforms are not without issues. The aircraft themselves have eight different communications packages offering varying levels of capability and interface with the users.³ Additionally, within the communication packages some sub-systems are either out-of-date, dealing with lack of spare parts to fix them or are altogether obsolete. Several reasons contribute to the foundation of the problem: 1) Speed of technology and changing requirements by the users, 2) Difficulty in gaining certification for new systems from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and to a lesser extent Department of Defense (DOD) agencies, and 3) Resourcing the required upgrades. The Air Force and Air Mobility Command (AMC) have little to no control over the speed of technological change, user requirements, or FAA/DOD certification timelines; however, how those onboard communication system upgrades are resourced is a controllable variable. Securing funding in a timely manner to field up-to-date, more standardized and critically needed capability is difficult under the current construct and will become more difficult as budgets tighten in the coming decade. Perhaps even more important is that an inefficient resourcing construct can exacerbate the other two issues, compounding the challenges both problems already uncontrollably introduce into the system.

This paper examines the importance of Executive Airlift (EA) and its Senior Leader Command, Control and Communication Systems – Airborne (SLC3S-A) and then evaluates how those systems' upgrades are funded onboard the EA fleet. It will then assess how a different yet also unique weapon system funds its mission-specific aircraft upgrades and compare the two programs to expose drawbacks to EA's construct. The result is an attempt to invigorate the discussion of how senior leader airborne communications can be fielded faster and more

efficiently to better support U.S. leaders. This paper argues EA and its SLC3S-A systems are analogous to another unique program that also faced resourcing issues; however, that other system corrected the problems, allowing the program's stakeholders more influence, adding efficiency to the resourcing process and ultimately providing better support to the end users. In a similar manner, senior leaders can be more effectively supported as they wield the instruments of national power carrying out the NSS if comparable changes are adapted for EA.

SLC3S-A Importance to National Security

Despite the 89 AW's annual budget being a very small percentage of AMC's budget (0.42% of the Rapid Global Mobility Fiscal Year 2013 budget), the importance of EA and its SLC3S-A systems to the nation's senior civil and military leaders is profound.⁴ From President Roosevelt's trip to the Casablanca Conference to shape the Allied framework for Nazi Germany's unconditional surrender to President Nixon's historic trip to reopen diplomatic relations with China to more recent trips for Secretaries of State Clinton and Kerry doing shuttle diplomacy during tensions over Libya and Syria, EA has enabled these most visible Air Force missions that were paramount to U.S. national security and interests. In today's world, the safe, comfortable and reliable air transportation for these leaders is still of utmost importance; however, the ability to securely communicate amongst each other as issues unfold in a high-paced diplomatic and military world has become just as significant.⁵

Four Instruments of National Power

The U.S. NSS of 2010 describes a comprehensive approach to global engagement in the 21st century. It outlines the utilization of diplomatic, information, military and economic approaches to renew U.S. leadership at home and abroad. The strategy describes committing the U.S. to international institutions, world economic development with the G-20, engaging allies

and emerging countries such as Brazil and China as well as less friendly nations like Russia, defeating Al Qaeda with the help of Pakistan, and securing the homeland. It speaks of a large diplomatic corps working around the globe on a multitude of initiatives while investing in our people and infrastructure at home.⁶ The U.S. dedication to a full spectrum approach to national security continues with the current administration and will likely continue beyond if history offers any reflection on what the future holds.

The Air Force's EA fleet is one of only a few, if perhaps not the only, military asset that regularly enables all four instruments of national power in support of NSS implementation. Additionally, it does this with a small footprint and, relatively speaking, a low cost. The aircraft and flight crews routinely fly both military and civilian leaders conducting the highest levels of diplomacy, military actions and negotiations throughout the country and around the globe.

Comparing how different military forces impact the country's NSS, most organizations directly influence the military instrument of power and perhaps one of the other three pillars. This is not to say that a C-17 Joint Precision Air Drop mission to a Forward Operating Base, an Army Brigade Combat Team's effort in Afghanistan, a naval Carrier Strike Group's (CSG) presence in the Persian Gulf, or a Marine Expeditionary Unit's (MEU) humanitarian employment in the Philippines is not a noble or incredibly worthy military implementation of power. Rather, it illustrates that those functions, while extraordinarily important to national security from tactical to strategic levels, at most impact one or two pillars of the country's strategy and are visible first and foremost as military missions. Additionally, while an asset such as a CSG or MEU may be engaging on multiple pillars of the NSS as it exercises and affects port visits with partners and allies, the incredibly large military footprint and cost is not even comparable. On the contrary, a well-executed EA mission hopes to increase short- or long-term

diplomatic solutions, outline new U.S. approaches and economic incentives and possibly forestall military actions that could save thousands of lives.⁷

One can make a plausible argument that no other organization or platform simultaneously enables the full spectrum of national instruments of power as does EA, and what makes these platforms unique for this mission are the SLC3S-A systems that allow secure and immediate global communication as world events unfold for a relatively small footprint and cost. In order to successfully enable senior leaders in the modern world of rapid communications, SLC3S-A must be kept up-to-date with the latest requirements. Without up-to-date communications systems onboard the EA fleet, the Air Force risks potential *mission failure*.

Defining Mission Failure

For the purposes of this writing, *mission failure* is defined as EA aircraft being unable to support the users because of obsolescence of SLC3S-A equipment due to lack of investment or untimely re-investment. Additionally, it is the inability to provide senior leaders the same or similar level of communications ability as one has in their respective office due to lack of bandwidth, interoperability issues with the latest generation of carry-on equipment technology, equipment failure or lastly, overall obsolescence.

Under the current metric of tracking issues such as dropped calls or internet unavailability, AMC boasts a 98% reliability rate for SLC3S-A users on a per flight leg basis, but it is worth noting that problems with the onboard equipment account for as many problems as the air-space link and ground systems segments combined.⁸ However, this data may be deceiving without its proper context. The metric is tracking reliability of the current systems onboard EA aircraft and reflects nothing of the future impact to the systems due to obsolescence and potential funding issues or the current impact to total level of service provided (as compared to a senior

leader's actual office environment). As will be discussed in the section below, the SecDef, Joint Requirements Oversight Council (JROC) and AMC have documented extended periods of less than desirable service levels as well as current and future gaps/seams that must be addressed to meet senior leader requirements now and in the future. There is an understanding by senior leadership that SLC3S-A has considerable issues; however, the funding construct has not yet been analyzed as a potential fix for the issue.

SLC3S-A Upgrade Funding – The Current Construct

For EA aircraft to receive SLC3S-A or any other type of upgrade, a complex process exists, as does for all AMC assets and infrastructure, to get validated, prioritized and funded to bring the requirement to reality. Over the past few years, several issues have evolved in the EA fleet's SLC3S-A systems, and exploring them is worthwhile before evaluating the current validation, prioritization and funding construct at AMC.

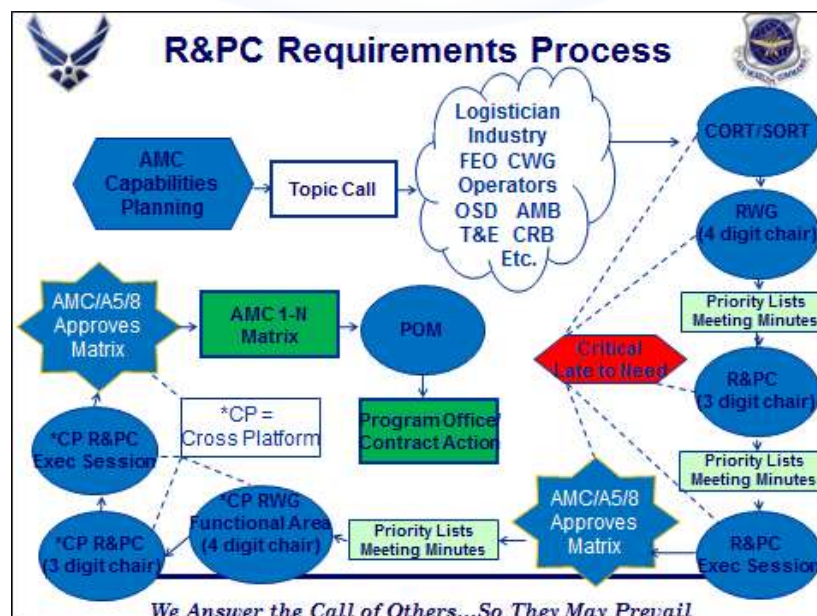
Capability Gaps and Shortfalls

As outlined in the "AMC Commercial Derivative Aircraft SLC3S-A Strategic Roadmap," seven major issues are highlighted as described in the JROC's SLC3S-A Initial Capabilities Document dated 2007 and its Capabilities Development Document dated 2008. The capability gaps and shortfalls of the broader system are the following:

1. Transition Senior Leaders seamlessly from fixed-site (e.g., permanent Government office) information operations to airborne information operations across all SLC3S-A assets
2. Manage bandwidth effectively
3. Supply standing bandwidth capacity to provide voice, data and video, which limits Senior Leaders' ability to receive and process information and to maintain situation awareness
4. Provide uniform communications information services and configurations across the fleet to meet Senior Leadership C2 and Day-to-Day requirements
5. Protect and defend Senior Leader communications services throughout the threat spectrum

- Additionally, in a SecDef memo dated 21 March 2007, Secretary Gates asked the Air Force to create an enduring solution for repetitive failures of secure communications to, “Ensure standard user transparent C3 services across all Services VIP/SAM fleet.”¹⁰ By 2008, numerous questions developed concerning the EA fleets’ SLC3S-A systems leaving high-level interest in the emerging capability gaps or outright shortfalls with respect to supporting U.S. senior leaders. To deal with the emerging requirements that would fill-in the gaps and shortfalls of SLC3S-A, AMC uses a complex requirements construct across all functions of the MAJCOM to eventually generate a single integrated and prioritized list of needs for this and all other AMC requirements.

Air Mobility Command's requirement validation, prioritization and funding ensue through the process illustrated in figure 1 below.



7

The Requirements and Planning Council (R&PC) process is detailed in the “AMC R&PC Council Charter” and other programming and funding documents for a much more comprehensive background.¹² However, for the purposes of this writing and broadly comparing it to another programming process, the AMC R&PC methodology will be analyzed and outlined in more general terms below.¹³

Annually, AMC puts out a call for topics (i.e. requirements for AMC weapon systems, infrastructure, etc.). These develop from a multiple sources as illustrated in figure 1—Communications Working Groups, Office of the Secretary of Defense, logisticians, actual operators, etc. Once a requirement is sponsored (normally by AMC/A5Q), it is sent to a Configuration Review Board (CRB) for validation as a requirement. All validated requirements by the CRB are then sent through a Crew Operations Support Team (CORT) and a Supportability Operations Support Team (SORT) process. The CORT is headed by operations specialists from AMC/A3R, and the SORT is led by logistics specialists from AMC/A4M. The CORT/SORT process rates each validated requirement as Mission Critical, Mission Essential or Mission Need from both an operator and support perspective. Based upon this result and the AMC commander’s overall command priorities guidance, the groups then rank order the requirements for each sub-functional area.

A Requirements Working Group (RWG) exists for each of the Mission Designated Series (MDS) aircraft as well as the functional areas of Command, Control, Communications, Computers and Intelligence (C4I), Training, En route Structures and Operational Support Aircraft (OSA)/EA. The RWGs take the CORT/SORT results from each of their sub-functional areas and create a master list of prioritized requirements for every MDS and functional area. Following completion of these validated and separately prioritized lists of requirements from the

RWGs, a Cross Platform RWG is formed to merge the lists to develop an overall master AMC listing of validated requirements so that they can either be immediately funded, held for fallout funding or inform the Program Objective Memorandum (POM) process for future years.

A Complex Issue

Within this AMC construct, one can see that a smaller, niche MDS or functional area could have its priorities overcome by large and highly visible programs such as the KC-46, C-17/C-130 airdrop capability to support warfighters on the ground, and other general modernization programs to C4I, aircraft and enroute structures. In many cases, those major warfighter support programs should and do win out in the prioritization process of AMC's finite budget; however, when a small, niche mission that is but a tiny subset of one of AMC's three core functions (Airlift, Air Refueling and Aeromedical Evacuation) is competing for resources, important needs of the program, such as SLC3S-A upgrades, can be lost in the noise.

In fact, OSA and EA combined have only received 2.7% of AMC's reinvestment dollars from FY 2009-2014. If one assumes relative tail-to-tail worth of AMC's weapon systems, then OSA/EA should have received over twice that amount in reinvestment funding since it makes up 5.56% of the command's Total Aircraft/Active Inventory (TAI). Additionally, what reinvestment dollars did make its way into the EA fleet during this same period came from excess funds for Presidential Aircraft upgrades or other fallout money—most upgrades were not planned in AMC's POM.¹⁴ In a command striving to support the warfighter and recapitalize its tanker fleet combined with shrinking budgets across the board, gaining traction for funding can be difficult and when it does happen, the process leads to reactionary upgrades rather than coherent ones as part of an overall long-term sustainability plan.

One smaller example of this is the Aircraft Information Management System (AIMS) upgrade to the C-20B. This system was to replace the post-9/11 Defense Emergency Relief Fund (DERF) communications systems needing replacement due to bandwidth deficiencies and interoperability issues with onboard user equipment. AMC purchased five AIMS kits but only modified two of the five aircraft after the upgrade was found to be less effective than planned. AMC elected not to spend several million dollars more to complete the modifications in a tight fiscal environment. The scenario left the C-20Bs operating two different yet still underperforming SLC3S-A systems, millions of investment dollars lost and millions unspent that were then reallocated to other non-EA upgrade programs.¹⁵

One major cause of the inability to gain traction for funding is that customers of EA reside entirely outside of AMC and a vast majority of them fall outside of the DOD, and perhaps even more importantly, EA missions are validated for success by those external users. A counter-argument to this viewpoint is that many of AMC's traditional users fall outside the Air Force as well which is why the Transportation Working Capital Fund (TWCF) system was established to collect reimbursement for support. However, the situation is different for EA when compared to AMC's strategic airlift and air refueling TWCF funding. First, because a large portion of AMC's mainstream customers do reimburse with TWCF, there is significant incentive to re-invest in those systems to support the vast user network. Second, despite not generating TWCF dollars, EA and its SLC3S-A systems execute the Air Force's highest level missions, enabling rapid and timely National Command Authority (NCA)-level command and control of conventional and nuclear forces, ensuring SecDef or DepSecDef vital continuity for Operation NOBLE EAGLE, and safeguarding White House communications with a travelling SecState executing global diplomacy, to name just a few examples of some external customers

utilizing EA and SLC3S-A. Despite EAs vital daily importance to U.S. national security, it can become difficult for a MAJCOM to see the reward for reinvestment in SLC3S-A systems supporting these types of external users that do not generate vast TWCF reimbursement funds...EA will almost certainly lose out in the prioritization methodology.

In the mid-1980s, a similar small program also received de-emphasized prioritization for resourcing of its requirements despite those small requirements being critical for the implementation of the NSS. How AFSOC today funds and upgrades its small fleet of aircraft offers an interesting comparison to the EA funding construct. The mission types, skillsets and most hardware requirements of EA and AFSOC could be described as diametrically opposed; however, their characteristics and importance to NSS execution are not. Both programs are a small, niche and non-traditional part of the much larger conventional force, doing missions with unique equipment for external users and validators of that mission success, and each one of those missions has significant implications for U.S. national security interests.

AFSOC MC-130s

Background

On 24 April 1980, Operation EAGLE CLAW was launched to rescue 52 hostages being held in Iran. In hindsight, the plan was laden with multiple contentious issues in how it was planned, prepared and ultimately executed. The failure to accomplish the mission, the destruction of two aircraft and the death of eight service members was a watershed event for the U.S. military and government as a whole.¹⁶

Congress responded to the crisis by enacting two pieces of legislation: The Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 and the Nunn-Cohen Amendment to the act in 1987.¹⁷ The Department of Defense Reorganization Act directed that the DOD

consider, “Creation of a unified combatant command for special operations missions which would combine the special operations missions, responsibilities, and forces of the armed forces.”¹⁸ However, shortly after the passage of this legislation, Congress not only recommended but rather mandated the creation of the Unified Combatant Command with the amendment.¹⁹

Congressional interest in Special Operations Forces (SOF) was for a wide spectrum of issues but the most significant impetus for legislative change was the problem surrounding SOF funding from within the conventional forces. On several occasions, the services had usurped Congress and the DOD by re-allocating SOF-specific funds to conventional military programs. One example is the procurement of MC-130 Combat Talons in the mid-1980s. Over a three year period, Congress authorized funding and directed the Air Force to buy more Combat Talons (or outfit more C-130s as MC-130s) because Operation EAGLE CLAW illustrated the need for enhanced SOF transportation and the fact that war plans at the time required approximately five times the number of Combat Talons than the Air Force then owned. Despite the funding, the Air Force continued to re-allocate the money to cover other conventional force expenses.²⁰ This lack of compliance and disregard for the importance of a less prominent mission such as SOF ultimately caused Congress to step in and take action.²¹

Funding Construct

The Nunn-Cohen Amendment set in place significant transformation within DOD. One of the largest of the changes was the creation of another Major Force Program (MFP)—MFP 11 for Special Operations.²² This modification to the budgetary and programming process had significant implications for SOF as well as conventional forces.

The Air Force, Army, Navy and Marines are tasked to organize, train and equip conventional forces that are supplied to the Geographic Combatant Commands (GCC) to employ

in their respective areas of responsibility. They receive funding through MFPs 1-10 to produce these forces for the GCCs. For example, research and development, procurement, personnel costs and operations and maintenance funds for the standard C-130 are appropriated mostly through MFP 4 (see figure 2 below). The Air Force then presents these forces for a GCC like USCENTCOM to employ with its separate GCC resources. For special operations, the concept and construct of MFP 11 money is slightly different.

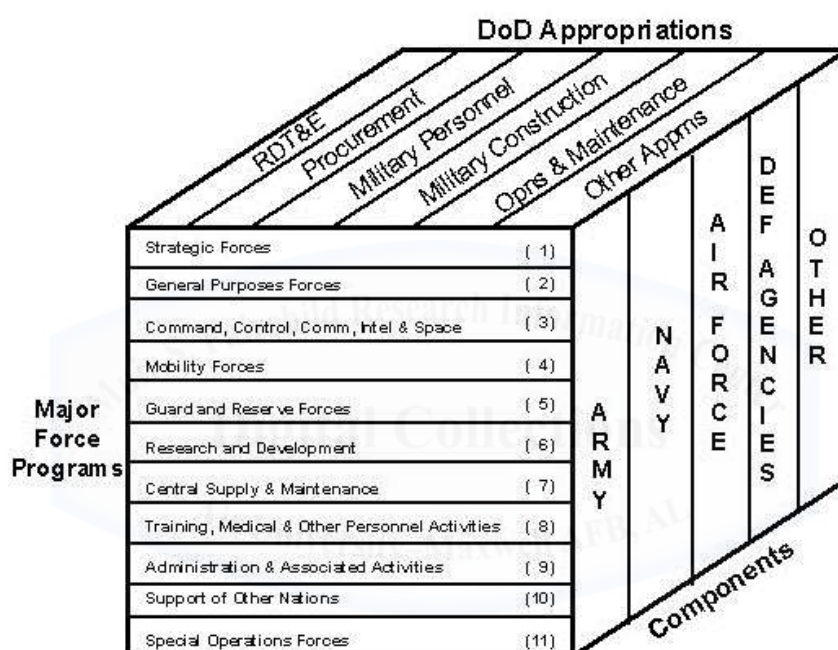


Figure 2. Future Years Defense Program (FYDP) Structure²³

USSOCOM was given an autonomous MFP to cover SOF-specific requirements so as to compete less with the other services and their large conventional programs. “MFP-11 covers major costs such as personnel, operations and maintenance, and the SOF-unique part of the acquisition costs of selected aircraft upgrades.”²⁴ In essence, SOF was given the service-like tasks and resourcing to organize, train and equip SOF and acquire SOF-peculiar equipment (i.e. things that cannot normally be supplied by the other services).²⁵ Although this separate funding stream provides great latitude, it does not pay for every SOF cost.

U.S. Title 10 and DOD Directives stipulate that parent services (i.e. the Air Force for AFSOC) bear the responsibility for funding common base support such as housing, professional military education and personnel support.²⁶ Additionally, a major piece not resourced by MFP 11 is the acquisition of SOF aircraft unless USSOCOM delineates a program as critically urgent.²⁷ When AFSOC acquired MC-130 aircraft, the Air Force was responsible for resourcing the basic airplanes using MFP 4 money; however, once delivered to AFSOC, MFP 11 money was then used to modify the basic C-130s with SOF-specific hardware making them MC-130s for special operations application.

A USAF-USSOCOM Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) enhances the resourcing support of SOF aircraft even further. Through these types of MOAs, if USSOCOM acquires already existing platforms in use by other services, the agreements make the parent service responsible for typical upgrades such as those for general avionics and routine depot maintenance.²⁸ In essence, the Air Force MAJCOM maintains responsibility for the long-term care and feeding of generic C-130 aircraft in its inventory. Per the MFP 11 construct from the Nunn-Cohen Amendment and the USAF-USSOCOM MOA, AFSOC modifies these same aircraft with mission-specific upgrades that turn standard C-130s into MC-130 special operations aircraft.

EA-SOF Comparison

Comparing the EA fleet's SLC3S-A upgrades to the SOF community modifying its airplanes with unique mission-specific hardware is not a perfect comparison for evaluating how to improve SLC3S-A to better support the end users; however, the implications of the analysis are striking.

Similar to the SOF fleets in the mid-1980s, EA today experiences comparable funding issues. For good reasons then and now, parent Services and more specifically MAJCOMs have their own conventional forces that they focus on to organize, train and equip. The focus was and is going to remain on the larger, traditional force programs that visibly back military actions in support of execution of the NSS, and that should remain so to guarantee warfighters are sustained at the highest levels by the Services. Given the budget pressures of sequestration, this focus on the overall large conventional programs will undoubtedly become even more acute.

Although this emphasis by the MAJCOMs and Services is important, EA and the importance of its SLC3S-A for secure communications have also been shown to be paramount to enabling national leaders executing the full spectrum of the NSS around the globe. As well, the SLC3S-A Strategic Roadmap outlined seven capability gaps/shortfalls, and the last one states, “Infuse advances in technology in a timely manner in the SLC3S-A operational environment.”²⁹ The system was mandated to be more responsive and robust to field the necessary upgrades to support the users. Additionally, the SecDef Memorandum from Secretary Gates highlights the importance of these systems and directs fixes in the short-term and long-term timeframes to ensure senior leaders are fully supported.³⁰ The issue has become a struggle between competing budgetary issues within AMC despite the high-level emphasis at the joint and OSD levels and beyond.

The rack-and-stack prioritization of requirements in AMC’s R&PC process was illustrated to be vigorous; however, small programs can become diluted or overcome by the larger programs that can be shown to directly support the warfighter as exhibited by the AIMS example. The disconnect for SOF back in the mid-1980s and perhaps EA assets today is that the importance of the missions, although very small in size and overall budget percentage, is

enormous for national security interests, but the users and validators of their mission success are mostly external to the MAJCOM and parent Service as well as DOD. A funding mismatch seems to exist not for the aircrew, aircraft and support, but rather for the SLC3S-A which make them truly unique to support the nation's senior leaders.

Due to the competing nature for resources between small, niche programs and traditional, conventional forces within the Services, Congress mandated a different construct in 1987 to ensure streamlined resourcing for SOF-specific equipment and upgrades. This new construct does not come without problems inherent in any budgeting process, but it is a more robust and streamlined one to ensure timely upgrades with state-of-the-art systems to support the users. For Fiscal Year 2013, the USSOCOM budget total (MFP 4 and 11) was only 1.7% of the total proposed DOD budget.³¹ Due to SOF also having budget constraints within USSOCOM and AFSOC, MFP 11 money is still limited when leveraged against large requirements so money is still prioritized in similar fashion to the R&PC process within AMC; however, overall SOF-specific money is focused on a portion of the force that concentrates solely on special operations. Despite a program being a small, niche mission, it receives a more appropriate level of consideration from SOF leaders that have a similar focus and expertise.

Recommendations

Several possibilities exist for how SLC3S-A funding could be modified based on the analysis of this writing: 1) Keep the status quo and continue funding the systems under the current AMC construct); 2) Advocate for a 12th MFP for EA to fund SLC3S and SLC3S-A; or 3) Resource a separate Air Force organization such as AF/CVA to fund SLC3S-A upgrades yet still keep the aircraft operating and generally funded under AMC and 18th Air Force.

Under the status quo option, the risk to mission failure as defined earlier increases over time. The current but less than desirable state of SLC3S-A is a result of the current construct. If it continues receiving the same prioritization in the budget-constrained environment, it may be unable to receive sufficient “catch-up” prioritization even if it reaches the point of failure because it will be compounded by the two other foundational issues (speed of technology/ever-changing user requirements and certification). The mission is far too important for enabling the NSS globally so this approach does not satisfy the need to improve the system to avoid unforeseen negative consequences to national interests. The SecDef, JROC and AMC have already identified significant issues under this current construct so continuing along this path appears less advantageous.

The approach of advocating for a 12th MFP is problematic with DOD and Congress in light of the budget constraints in the coming decade. In the current fiscal environment, it may be politically impossible to divide out EA funding into a separate, more visible stream. Additionally, with the overall budget footprint of EA and SLC3S-A being much smaller than even that of SOF, the cost-benefit analysis would argue against the effort to change Title 10 responsibilities. A compromise between this option and the status quo is likely more desirable as well as politically feasible.

The final proposed funding construct is to resource a separate Air Force organization with normal MFP 4 funding to establish, validate, prioritize and fund the EA-specific upgrades to AMC’s EA fleet. The current process of AMC operating and maintaining the fleet would stay in place; however, similar to AFSOC MC-130s, the Air Force would resource the mission-specific upgrades from a separate organization that will prioritize the money more appropriately with EA as its focus. Although not using MFP 11 (or 12) money to fund the upgrades, it uses SOF as a

model for how to better manage those types of upgrades for a small yet vital mission to national security. Additionally, a second-order benefit may result from this approach. By resourcing a Pentagon-based organization such as AF/CVA to manage and fund these upgrades, the potential exists for leveraging the 89 AW's Future Requirements office personnel and EA/SLC3S-A expertise since they are both co-located in the National Capital Region.

Conclusion

Supporting the warfighter, recapitalization and reduced budgets will continue to limit funding throughout the Air Force and AMC over the coming decade. One can understandably recognize how a small, niche mission such as EA gets de-prioritized when a multitude of requirements are competing for limited resources. However, the importance of EA and its SLC3S-A to the U.S. NSS and interests has been shown. So as to avert the growing risk of mission failure, a new approach to funding these critical upgrades is warranted. While staying with the status quo may work, the Air Force is accepting risk for it external users of which they may not be aware. The SOF construct may be a methodology to be built upon and adapted to a similarly small but important mission of the Air Force.

Notes

¹ *The United States National Security Strategy* (May 2010), 2-3.

² Joint Base Andrews, “89th Airlift Wing Fact Sheet,” Joint Base Andrews, MD.
<http://www.andrews.af.mil/library/factsheets/factsheet.asp?id=4748> (Accessed January 2014)

³ NOTE: This data does not include the communication systems on board the 2 VC-25s of the Presidential Airlift Group. MSgt, Air Mobility Command Requirements (AMC/A5), Scott AFB, IL, to the author, email 13 January 2014. (unattributed email)

⁴ The 89 AW’s budget was approximately \$67M of the \$15.9B budget for the Rapid Global Mobility core function of the U.S. Air Force FY’13 budget. Air Force Financial Management and Comptroller, “United States Air Force FY 2013 Budget Overview,” SAF/FMB, 3 February 2012, 51. <http://www.saffm.hq.af.mil/shared/media/document/AFD-120209-052.pdf> (Accessed December 2013).

⁵ The 89th Airlift Wing Mission: “Enabling National Interests through Global Transportation and Support for America’s Senior Leaders... Safe, Comfortable, Reliable, Connected and Protected!” from “89th Airlift Wing SAMFOX Doctrine Primer,” 89th Airlift Wing, June 2012.

⁶ *The United States National Security Strategy* (Washington, D.C.: The White House, May 2010).

⁷ “89th Airlift Wing SAMFOX Doctrine Primer,” 89th Airlift Wing, June 2012.

⁸ Depending on how the statistics are calculated, it is possible to see metric results in the range of 94-99 percent reliability rate. MSgt, Air Mobility Command Requirements (AMC/A5), Scott AFB, IL, to the author, email 21 January 2014. (unattributed email) and “Historical Trend Good/Bad Legs,” Global Network Operations Center, 89th Communications Squadron, 89th Airlift Wing, November 2013.

⁹ Quoted in Kerry M. Welker, “Air Mobility Command Commercial Derivative Aircraft Senior Leadership Command, Control, and Communications System – Airborne Strategic Roadmap,” AMC/A5QV Whitepaper prepared for Air Mobility Command, Version 2.1, 3 October 2012, 1.

¹⁰ Quoted in Welker, “Air Mobility Command Commercial Derivative Aircraft Senior Leadership Command, Control, and Communications System – Airborne Strategic Roadmap,” 2.

¹¹ “Air Mobility Command Requirements and Planning Council (R&PC) Charter,” Air Mobility Command, Version 4.0, 8.

¹² For detailed background on the requirements planning process for AMC, see “Air Mobility Command Requirements and Planning Council (R&PC) Charter,” Air Mobility Command, Version 4.0.

¹³ The R&PC broad overview in this section is derived from the “Air Mobility Command Requirements and Planning Council (R&PC) Charter” and validated by two interviews from a Lieutenant Colonel and GS-14 from Air Mobility Command, 12-13 December 2013. (unattributed interviews)

¹⁴ GS-12, Air Mobility Command Requirements, Scott AFB, IL, to the author, email 17 December 2013. (unattributed email)

¹⁵ Author was the Director of Operations and Squadron Commander of the 99th Airlift Squadron, 89th Operations Group, 89th Airlift Wing, Joint Base Andrews, MD from September 2009 to June 2012 during the AIMS upgrades to the unit's C-20B DERF aircraft.

¹⁶ Lucien S. Vandenbroucke, *Perilous Options: Special Operations as an Instrument of U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), Chapter 7 and 8.

¹⁷ Bryan D. Brown, "U.S. Special Operations Command: Meeting the Challenges of the 21st Century," *Joint Forces Quarterly*, Issue 40, 1st Quarter, 2006, 39.

¹⁸ *Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act*, Public Law 99-433, 99th Congress (1 October 1986), 27.

¹⁹ William G. Boykin, *The Origins of the United States Special Operations Command*, United States Special Operations Command, 4.

²⁰ Ibid, 8.

²¹ Ibid, 4-8.

²² Bryan D. Brown, "U.S. Special Operations Command: Meeting the Challenges of the 21st Century," *Joint Forces Quarterly*, Issue 40, 1st Quarter, 2006, 2.

²³ "Future Years Defense Program (FYDP)," *ACQuipedia*. Defense Acquisition University, 26 September 2012.

²⁴ Rebecca Grant, Richard Comer, and Thomas P. Ehrhard, *Special Operations Forces Aviation at the Crossroads* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), February 2007), 3.

²⁵ Joint Publication (JP) 1, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*, 25 March 2013, III-6, 7.

²⁶ Air Force Special Operations Command Briefing, "Major Force Programming," Slide 2, 3.

²⁷ Grant, Comer, and Ehrhard, *Special Operations Forces Aviation at the Crossroads*, 3.

²⁸ Ibid, 23.

²⁹ Kerry M. Welker, "Air Mobility Command Commercial Derivative Aircraft Senior Leadership Command, Control, and Communications System – Airborne Strategic Roadmap," AMC/A5QV Whitepaper prepared for Air Mobility Command, Version 2.1, 3 October 2012, 1.

³⁰ Robert M. Gates, Secretary of Defense, memorandum, 21 March 2007.

³¹ U.S. Senate, *Posture Statement of Admiral William H. McRaven, USN, Commander, United States Special Operations Command*, 112th Congress, Senate Armed Services Committee, 6 March 2012, 6.

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